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ABSTRACT

This handbook is divided into two sections focusing on awareness and assessment activities designed to improve the total environment of the school. The activities can be used by one or more persons, and are appropriate for students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. The first section presents suggestions and activities to help explore individuals' awareness of the school environment in three dimensions. The first of these is self-awareness in the school environment, the second is awareness of settings within the school environment, and the third is awareness of general school environment. Forms are provided for clarifying personal attitudes and behaviors and for drawing up an individual daily activities profile. Activities are presented to help the individual identify some of the important settings in the school, to become aware of the location of significant settings, and to identify settings in which significant interactions take place. Forms are provided to aid in examining the physical characteristics of the school environment and the rules that govern behavior in that environment. The emphasis is upon the ways that these dimensions influence school participants and their interactions with each other. The second section is designed to aid in assessing the school environment and in investigating the attitudes and behaviors of the people in the school. Forms are provided for assessing personal strengths, weaknesses, and attitudes. Three worksheets are designed to allow individuals to assess and analyze specific locations in the school, problems they may present, and rules that govern behaviors in those settings. A questionnaire or general school survey that may be used in planning changes in the school environment is included. (JD)

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SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT HANDBOOK

PART II: ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

by

Patricia deHaas

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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INTRODUCTION

The School Environmental Handbook is a product of the School Environmental Impact Program. Its purpose is to help to improve school environments in order to produce more positive attitudes and behaviors of school participants, including administrators, teachers, support staff, students, and parents. The physical environments of schools and the rules which structure behavior have a profound impact on school participants. This handbook is designed to help schools to assess the conditions in their environment and to make changes which will produce more positive attitudes and more responsible behaviors.

The handbook has three parts. They are outlined below:

Part I is devoted to providing an overview of the Program and a model set of workshop materials. Schools using this part of the handbook can conduct workshops for any or all school staff which will enhance participants awareness of their environment and give them opportunities to plan changes which will affect attitudes and behaviors. An annotated bibliography is presented which is useful for all parts of the handbook.

Part II of the handbook focuses on awareness and assessment activities. Participants using this sogment of the handbook will have many activities which will make either some argment of the school community or the entire school community more aware of its environment. Other activities focus on collecting information about the environment so that schools can "have the facts" before they proceed with proposed changes.

Part III includes planning for change and evaluation of changes that are implemented. Resources for activities on goal setting, steps in the planning process, and evaluating changes are presented in this section. Schools using this part of the handbook can develop strategies for change and assess their consequences.

The handbook is intended to be used flexibly. All three parts can be used together as a comprehensive program for school change. Otherwise, parts of the handbook can be used by individuals, groups within schools, school organizations or districts for targeted purposes or short-term goals. Basically, the handbook involves putting together school personnel -- including students, teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents -- to facilitate change. Any of these groups can initiate changes in a particular setting in their school or in the general school environment.

Material included here focuses on the cafeteria as the hub of the school. Two years of research in schools at all levels has demonstrated that activity in the cafeteria interacts profoundly with behavior in other school settings such as classrooms, libraries, and hallways. It is a two-way interaction: what is right or wrong with the cafeteria may stem from inside this setting,

but it may as well stem from outside the cafeteria itself. This handbook focuses on settings in the whole school environment. In a particular school, improvements in any one setting, such as the hallway, will most probably have a positive impact on many others, including the cafeteria. Improvements in the cafeteria will most probably have a positive impact on other settings, such as classrooms. We are interested here in helping to make changes in any of those settings where schools identify problems, for we know they will affect attitudes and behaviors school-wide.

The handbook stems from a program called the School Environmental Impact Program. This Program is funded by the Nutrition Education and Training Program, Division of School Food and Nutrition, of the Indiana Department of Public Instruction. Judith Gillespie has directed the Program and participated in the production of its key products. Patricia deHaas has made a major contribution to the development of this handbook. Both David Kessler and Mary Soley contributed to initial drafts of this material. David Kessler has had a major role in developing an associated research report reflecting the findings from information gathered during the study of the impact of school environments.

The project has piloted these materials and conducted workshops across the state of Indiana. Those who participated in the pilot test include Judith Gillespie, Patricia deHaas, Mary Soley, David Kessler, Barbara Allen, Mike Berheide, Gail Bumgarner, Debra Dean, Marsha Ellis, Christa McCluggage, Teresa Therrien, and Linda Wojtan. Acknowledgements are due to these individuals and to the schools who participated in the development of the workshops.

South Spencer Middle School: Rockport, Indiana
Woodside Middle School: Fort Wayne, Indiana
Greendale Middle School: Lawrenceburg, Indiana
Clarksville Middle School: Clarksville, Indiana
Fairmont Elementary School: New Albany, Indiana
Cynthia Heights School: Evansville, Indiana
University Middle School: Bloomington, Indiana
Terre Haute South High School: Terre Haute, Indiana
Vohr Elementary School: Gary, Indiana
Tolleston Middle School: Gary, Indiana
Horace Mann High School: Gary, Indiana

For further information about the project and its publications, please contact one of two sources. Either write to School Environmental Impact Program, Program in Educational Policy and Change, Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Indiana University, 814 East Third Street, Bloomington, Indiana 47405; or to the Coordinator, Nutrition Education and Training Program, Division of School Food and Nutrition, Department of Public Instruction, Room 229, State House, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Introduction

As people walk around a school, there are some things they notice right away. Usually people think about the noise. They notice their friends or colleagues. They see what is happening in the cafeteria. They look at a particular bulletin board. There are standard things which they pay attention to everyday, but the remaining elements of the environment go largely unnoticed. The purpose of the School Environment Handbook is to show how schools are much richer environments than most people realize, and to help to increase your awareness of this environment.

The fact that school environments have an effect on participants has been well documented. Below are just a few generalizations to show you the ways in which the impact is most strong.

1. Most students feel more negative about their environment than do the adults in the school community.

2. Most people feel that the environment is too noisy.

3. Most people feel that rules in the environment are inconsistently enforced.

4. Most people do not feel that they make important decisions about the school environment.

5. Certain settings in the school environment, e.g., the library, are highly attractive and promote more positive attitudes than other settings.

As a result of these types of statements, most people feel that they cannot help to make many improvements in schools. They also do not take very many participant roles which would help them to develop skills to improve the school community. Therefore, the environmental conditions have a great deal of impact on participants.

There are many reasons why awareness of the environment is important. As you can tell, it has an impact on school participants. It is important to understand and to control school environments in order to make sure they have the most positive impact that they can on people who are participating in schools. Secondly, awareness of the environment can help people to use the existing environment to improve attitudes and behaviors. Finally, awareness of the environment can help people to make positive changes in their environment.

The purpose of this section is to help you to explore your awareness of your school environment in three dimensions. First, you can explore

your awareness of yourself as a participant in the school environment. Second, you can investigate your awareness of settings within the school environment, specifically the cafeteria, library, and classrooms. Third, you can assess your awareness of general school environmental dimensions, such as the physical environment or the rules that structure the way people behave. There will be both descriptions and activities which will be helpful in increasing awareness of school participants of their environment and as a basis for making positive changes in the school environment.

The activities can be used by one or many persons, and are appropriate for students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. The activities are described in each section. Directions for using each activity and for interpreting the results are included in the description. A worksheet is provided for each activity on the following pages. These worksheets can be duplicated for use in staff meetings, meeting with parents, and in classrooms.

THE BENEFITS OF INCREASED AWARENESS

The workshop group from the middle school sat in a circle in one of the motel meeting rooms. They joked with the workshop leaders about the hot room (in spite of the 40° temperatures outside) and the lack of windows, and the friendly workshop leaders. This group was very verbal and enthusiastic. They became aware of their workshop surroundings very quickly.

The workshop leaders explained that the activities of the day would include those on awareness, assessment, goal-setting, planning, and evaluation. The group looked skeptically at the awareness activity. Hadn't they become immediately aware of their surroundings on this day? And having spent so much time in their fairly old school building, weren't they exceptionally aware, even over-aware, of their school environment?

The leaders were patient. Maybe the group was already over-aware of its school environment. But why not complete the awareness activity and find out?

The group was very silent as they read and responded to the questions. A few raised eyebrows could be seen and several comments of "hmm, I never thought of this before" could be heard as the teachers, students, two cafeteria workers, librarian, counselor, school secretary, reading lab teacher, parents, and principal completed their forms. Using large sheets of paper, the workshop leaders tallied the group members' responses to questions about their attitudes about their school and the people within it.

The results were not only fascinating to the group as a whole, but also convinced the members that "awareness" meant more than just recognizing that it was too hot in some places and too cold in others in the

school, and that the school building was too old and too small to support many important school activities. This group was over-aware of the physical limitations of their school environment. But the awareness activity in this workshop showed the group how resourceful they were as creative users of their physical facilities. The activity pointed out to them how important their cooperative interaction was for them both professionally and personally.

The sense of community that pervaded this group and, through them, the entire school, helped to make this school a place where all students and adults work together to learn and grow. Before completing this activity, the group members had not realized how much they depended upon their sense of community to help them deal with the limitations of their physical school environment.

This group will soon be working in a new school building. Their physical problems will be solved. But after identifying their all-important sense of community through the workshop awareness activity, the group decided on a goal for the new school: to transfer to the new building the same cooperation and support of each other that has been so important in their present building.

SELF-AWARENESS

Increasing your self-awareness in your school environment is the first step toward making any changes. Before you can assess strengths and weaknesses in an environment and suggest changes, you must be aware of what your environment is like right now. Therefore, this section is about you as a member of your school community. Here you can examine your awareness of yourself as you act in the school environment as well as how you feel about it and what kinds of roles you take. It is these two parts of self-awareness -- attitudes and behavior -- that will be addressed here.

The first part deals with attitudes. How do you feel as a participant in the school community? Do you feel good or bad about what you are doing in school? Are there particular problems that you have or particular things that you are happy about that should be preserved? Do not look just for negative attitudes. It is an important part of improvement to preserve those things which people like, as well as to remove those things which people dislike.

The two attitudes that are of interest here are self-esteem and efficacy. By "self-esteem" is meant how you feel about yourself and what you are doing. By "efficacy" is meant whether or not you think you can do something to change or preserve some elements of the school community of which you are a part.

In addition to attitudes this section deals with participation. Do you do things in the school community? How do you participate, that is, are you a leader or a follower? This dimension concerns what kinds of roles you take. Do not be mistaken. Everyone need not be a leader. Followers are as important to the school community as leaders are.

Another important dimension of participation involves role models. The models that are in the school community include students, teachers, staff, and administrators. Some people are important models for others. You can become more aware of those models and utilize them for positive participation in contributions to the school setting.

In all of these areas, you can examine your awareness of your attitudes and your participatory behaviors. The activities that follow are designed to help you become more aware of how you feel and how you behave in the school community.

Attitude Inventory: Page 6

This activity is designed to determine your awareness of your attitudes and behaviors. Through this activity you can become more aware of the attitudes of self-esteem and efficacy which you have and can examine what parts of the environment have a positive and negative impact on those attitudes. Complete the worksheet. Then use the following directions to interpret your answers.

Look at your answers to questions 1 through 8. Did you use 4's and 5's to describe your feelings? Then your school environment helps to make you a better person!

How did you answer questions 9 and 10? Can you help to change the thing that you like least about your school? How could you do this? What things can you learn from what you like best about school? Does this give you clues about how to change the thing you like the least?

Share your responses with your group members if you are working in a group. Make a table of everyone's responses and list the things you like most and least about the school in order to help the group become more aware of others' attitudes.

Daily Activities Profile: Page 7

Activity #3 is designed to profile your everyday activities and your feelings about those activities for any day that you choose in your school setting. Take an average day of the year and use the form to characterize your activities. Complete the chart, then answer the following questions:

1. What is the most positive aspect of your everyday activity?

2. What is the most negative aspect of your everyday activity?

3. What supports your positive activity?

4. Why do you find some activities negative?

5. If you wanted to change one thing in your school environment that would improve your attitudes or behaviors, what would that be?

Share your answers to these questions with your group members or with other students and adults in your school. Try to list three main positive and negative aspects of your school environment and discuss the changes that could be made.

ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR INVENTORY

INSTRUCTIONS: The items below are designed to determine your awareness of your attitudes and behaviors. A scale is involved. The scale begins at #1 and gets higher until #5. At the #1 level you are responding "never" to the statement. At the #5 level you are responding "always" to the statement. #3 is the neutral point or middle point where you are saying that you do something or feel something about half of the time. This scale should be used throughout the following itmes. Circle the one number beside the scale which is closest to your feelings or behaviors. 1 = Never, 2 = Some of the time, 3 = Half of the time, 4 = Most of the time, and 5 = Always.

* * * * * *

School _____

Position:

1 = Administrator	1
2 = Teacher	2
3 = Support Staff	3
4 = Parent	4
5 = Student	5

Grade ____ ____

Sex:

1 = Male	1
2 = Female	2

		Never	Some	Half	Most	Always
1. I like myself when I am in school.	1.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I do things that matter to me or to others in school.	2.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I think that I matter to at least one other person in school.	3.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Students I know at my school like me.	4.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Adults I know at my school like me.	5.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I know what is going on in my school.	6.					
7. I help to make choices about what will be done in my school.	7.					
8. I do things to help improve my school.	8.					

9. The thing I like most about school is:

_____

_____

_____

10. The thing I like the least about school is:

_____

_____

_____

DAILY ACTIVITIES PROFILE

This activity will help you to profile your everyday activities at school. Take an average day of the year and use the form to characterize your activities. In the first column, list 10 activities you have done in your school on the day you have selected. In the column, list how you feel about these activities -- positive, negative, worthwhile, silly. In the third column, list your behaviors -- leader, follower, model for others. You can be both a leader or follower and a model for others at the same time. For example, a student doing his or her homework is both a follower of the assignment and a model for other students.

* * * * * *

School _____

Position:

1 = Administrator	1
2 = Teacher	2
3 = Support Staff	3
4 = Parent	4
5 = Student	5

Grade ___ ___

Sex:

1 = Male	1
2 = Female	2

PROFILE OF EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL

Activities	Attitudes	Participation Behaviors
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

AWARENESS OF SCHOOL SETTINGS

Schools abound with different settings. Settings have a lot to do with whether or not the people in the school can find a place of their own, or a place to talk with others. They have a lot to do with whether or not people enjoy the school or dislike it. The purpose here is to increase your awareness of the settings in your school and their impact on your attitudes and behavior.

Think about some of the settings in your school: the cafeteria, the classrooms, the hallways, the library, the teachers' lounge. What makes the cafeteria a setting? First of all, it is defined by its physical characteristics. It is usually a large room or area and its furnishings give clues to its use. Physical characteristics are one way to define settings, but there are also other ways. Interpersonal interaction defines many settings, especially the cafeteria. The cafeteria may be the only setting in the school in which students, teachers, support staff, and administrators all interact together. While a lot of interpersonal interaction may already occur in your cafeteria, it is possible that there could be even more interaction in this setting which would make it a more positive place for all of these groups of people to interact.

Although the School Environmental Impact Program is interested in three major settings, there are actually hundreds of settings within schools. In their study of school settings, Barker and Gump found over 300 settings in even the smallest schools. Think about the settings in your school. How many can you name?

School participants all have particular settings that they like in school. The settings have positive qualities for the people who use them. Of all the settings in schools that were studied by the School Environmental Impact Program, the library was rated the highest by most people. Why do people like the library so much? People might like the library because it has a lot of books in it, because it is quiet, because it is normally well decorated, or because it has windows. The positive qualities of settings can vary from person to person; but generally people will all agree on some settings that are good settings to be in.

Settings which are well-liked by people in the school might give you clues about changes that could be made in less attractive or desirable settings in the school. Specifically, the positive qualities of libraries may provide clues that will help make the cafeteria a more pleasant place for all school participants.

The negative qualities of some settings might also provide clues about potential changes. Why don't some people in the school like the cafeteria, or certain classrooms? Perhaps they are noisy, drab, or perhaps people cannot talk in them. There may be many other reasons why people do not like certain settings. These negative qualities are barriers to enjoying being in school and to learning within it. People do not do their best when they are in a setting which poses barriers for them.

In this section you will look at school settings in terms of three dimensions. First, you will be concerned about the physical environment of the setting: the physical structure, the color of the walls, the size of the room, the facilities contained within it.

Second, you will examine the rules which govern the behavior in the setting. You can assess whether people are constrained or supported by those rules in doing what they want to do. Students often claim, for example, that they cannot talk in classrooms. This rule promotes schooling, but is seen by many students as a barrier within the classroom setting. While the rule might not be changeable, other positive features in the setting might be enhanced.

Finally, you will study the interpersonal interaction that occurs in the setting. This interaction helps to define a setting as much or more than the physical characteristics of the setting.

In the activities below you will increase your awareness of the number and kind of settings in your school and their positive and negative qualities. As you look through the activities, think about the physical structure, the rules, and the interpersonal interactions that make the settings supportive for you or are barriers for working in the school environment.

Identifying Settings: Page 11

This activity will help you to identify some of the important settings in your school and the characteristics of those settings. Remember that settings are any physical places where people gather together. Be sure to include settings that are used by students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. Using the worksheet, make a list of all the settings in your school that you can think of. Then consider the following questions. If you are working in a group, use large sheets of paper to list the group members' answers to these questions.

1. What are the most important characteristics of most settings?

2. How do the physical characteristics of settings help to define them?

3. Are there more rules for behavior in some settings than in others?

4. In which settings do students, teachers, support staff, and administrators all interact together?

Plotting Settings: Page 12

This activity will help you to become more aware of the location of significant settings in your school environment. The activity instructs you to draw a map of your school and to plot some of the important settings in your school on your map.

Share your maps with other members of your group or with other students and adults in your school. Discuss the following questions with those people who examine your map.

1. Are the most widely used settings in the school easy to find and easy to get to?

2. How much does the physical layout of the school determine the placement of many settings?

3. Could you imagine changing the location of some of the settings in your school? How would you change them?

Interactive Settings: Page 13

This activity encourages you to think about settings in which you interact with people every day. Use the worksheet to list the settings in which you interact with others.* Then rank the settings as to whether you like or dislike them. Also take notes on why you like or dislike the settings. Then answer the following questions:

1. Are you in more settings during the day that you like or dislike?

2. What is it you like the most about some settings?

3. What is it you dislike the most?

4. How could some settings be changed in order to remove the things you dislike?

Based on your answers on the worksheet, you can discuss the following questions with your group members or with other students or adults in your school. These questions will help you to organize your answers on the worksheet and will help you to increase your overall awareness about important settings in your school

* If you already completed the "Identifying Settings" activity on page 11, you can use the same list of settings in completing this activity.

School _____

Position:
1 = Administrator 1
2 = Teacher 2
3 = Support Staff 3
4 = Parent 4
5 = Student 5
Grade ___ ___

Sex:
1 = Male 1
2 = Female 2

IDENTIFYING SETTINGS

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete this survey of settings alone or in a group. Share your responses with others and answer the questions about the activity contained in the description.

* * * * * *

Settings	Physical Characteristics	Rules Used in Setting	People Who Interact in Setting (Students, Teachers, Support Staff, Administrators)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			

12

School _____

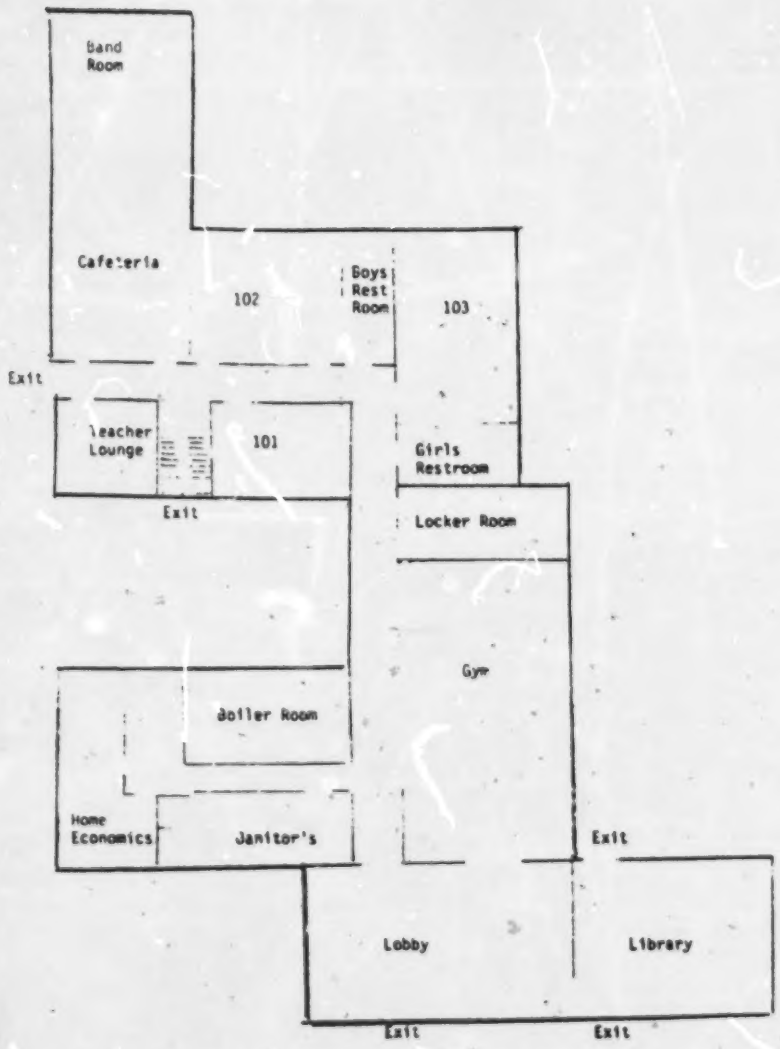
Position:
1 = Administrator 1
2 = Teacher 2
3 = Support Staff 3
4 = Parent 4
5 = Student 5
Grade ____ ____

Sex:
1 = Male 1
2 = Female 2

PLOTTING SETTINGS

Here is a sample map of the first floor of a school. Notice where the various settings are located. Draw a map of your own school on this page and plot the settings which you listed in the "Identifying Settings" activity on your map.

* * * * * *



FIRST FLOOR

School _____

Position:
1 = Administrator 1
2 = Teacher 2
3 = Support Staff 3
4 = Parent 4
5 = Student 5
Grade ____ ____

Sex:
1 = Male 1
2 = Female 2

INTERACTIVE SETTINGS

INSTRUCTIONS: This activity encourages you to think about settings in which you interact with people every day. Use the worksheet to list the settings in which you interact with others. If you already completed the "Identifying Settings" activity on page 11, you can use the same list of settings in completing this activity. Then rank the settings as to whether you like or dislike them. Also take notes on why you like or dislike the settings.

* * * * * *

Settings in Which I Interact With Others	Rank (5 = Like the best, 4 = Like some, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Don't like, 1 = Like the least.	What I Like or Dislike About the Setting
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

AWARENESS OF THE GENERAL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The school environment is created by the settings in the school and the individual people who interact in those settings. The characteristics of many settings influence behavior throughout the school. The rules which govern behavior in the cafeteria certainly affect the behavior of students as they return to their classrooms after lunch. The time that a student or teacher spends in the quiet, attractive library in the morning may make the classroom in which he or she spends her afternoon a very pleasant place. Many aspects of the general school environment have an impact on your school life. They have a direct impact on both your attitudes and behavior.

In this section you will examine the physical characteristics of the general school environment and the rules that govern behavior in the environment. The specific interest here concerns the ways that these dimensions influence the school participants and their interactions with each other.

The physical environment of the school includes the general physical facility as well as its colors, noise, and temperature. All of these characteristics affect people's everyday lives. If it is too hot, it is hard to be productive. If it is too noisy, it often affects people's comfort in settings. Color can help make people happier. All kinds of improvements in physical settings that are made by school groups working together can increase both attachment to the school and productivity in school. Being aware of the physical environment and its impact in your particular school will help you to see what is happening now and how the physical environment might be improved to foster more positive attitudes and behaviors.

The rules in the environment also affect all school participants. If there are too many rules, people can have a hard time determining what the rules are and how they can be applied. Probably the most important aspect of rules is the consistency of their enforcement. Consistent enforcement can help individuals to see where they are and how they are to act within the system. Rules that are consistently enforced are also easier to change. Furthermore, inconsistent enforcement of rules may promote negative feelings by unnecessarily grouping or stereotyping individuals.

People are not normally very aware of these general aspects of the environment. However, they can each or in combination affect people dramatically. The activities that follow are designed to provide increased awareness of these various dimensions of the environment.

What Represents My School: Page 16

This activity will help you discover how you think of your school environment. If you think about your school, there are certain people, scenes, and objects that represent your school to you. Use the worksheet to describe what they are. Then answer the following questions:

1. What is your reaction to the people, scene, and object that represent your school?

2. Are you feeling happy, sad, proud, disappointed? The feelings that this activity creates in you help you to see how you think of your general school environment.

3. How are your answers different from others? If you combine your answers with the answers of others, can you achieve an accurate picture of your school environment?

Physical Environment Survey: Page 17

Since the physical environment is one important part of the total school environment, this activity allows you to do a survey of the physical environment in your school. Use the worksheet provided to count the number of rooms in your school and to describe their physical characteristics.

After you have completed the worksheet, share it with the other members of your group or with other students or adults in your school. If you are working in a group, make a list of the classrooms which people chose to describe. What are the common features that people noticed about these rooms? Then make a list of the other rooms which people chose to describe. What was the room most often chosen?

This activity will help you and others in your school, for example your group members, to share their awareness about the physical features of specific places in the school. It is important that you become aware of the heating and cooling systems, the physical layout, and the physical furnishings in order to discover which physical features are important in creating and maintaining a positive environment.

School _____

Position:

1 = Administrator	1
2 = Teacher	2
3 = Support Staff	3
4 = Parent	4
5 = Student	5
Grade	___ ___

Sex:

1 = Male	1
2 = Female	2

WHAT REPRESENTS MY SCHOOL

This activity will help you discover how you think of your school environment. Very often there is one group of people or one setting which represents the environment. For example, the cafeteria may represent the environment to some people because it is colorful, is a place where they can talk with others, and is staffed by a friendly group of people. What represents your school to you? Complete this worksheet to find out.

* * * * * *

People, Scene, and Object that Represents School	Characteristics of People, Scene, and Object (Include Physical Characteristics and Rules if Appropriate)	Why This Represents My School
1. People		
2. Scene		
3. Object		

School _____

Position:
1 = Administrator 1
2 = Teacher 2
3 = Support Staff 3
4 = Parent 4
5 = Student 5
Grade ___ ___

Sex:
1 = Male 1
2 = Female 2

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT SURVEY

INSTRUCTIONS: The physical environment is an important part of the school environment. This activity will allow you to do your own survey of your school's physical environment. Carry this worksheet with you as you tour the school to count the number of rooms and to describe their physical characteristics.

* * * * * *

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROOMS IN SCHOOL: _____

HOW MANY ROOMS ARE CLASSROOMS? _____

Choose one classroom and describe its heating and cooling system, its wall decorations, and its furnishings.

CLASSROOM: _____

DESCRIPTION: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Choose one room that is <u>not</u> a classroom and describe its heating and cooling system, its wall decorations, and its furnishings.

ROOM: _____

DESCRIPTION: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

People assess things and situations every day. To "assess" means to "determine the value" of something. The value of something is determined by its strong points and weak points. Therefore, assessment of something points out its strengths and weaknesses.

This section will help you investigate the attitudes and behaviors of people in your school. Your investigation will help you to see the possibilities for changes within your school. You can carry out assessments in three areas: of yourself, of settings in your school, and of your general school environment. Many of the activities involve survey-type exercises which are designed to help you gather information. Other exercises will examine the process that promotes or controls change in your school.

Both assessment and change are a natural part of every school day. Some assessments promote change, while it seems as though others are not acted upon and do not produce change. Change can occur very quickly or more gradually. It is easy to see changes that occur quickly, but you must watch carefully for changes that occur over a long period of time.

Assessment helps you to focus on your own strengths and weaknesses as well as the strengths and weaknesses of your school. It is very important to examine strengths as well as weaknesses. The strengths that you can uncover will help you to eliminate the weaknesses. Here is an example of how one school's assessment helped the people in the school to solve a pressing problem:

The Benefits of Assessment

The workshop at this middle school brought together enthusiastic committed teachers, support staff, students, parents, and one administrator. This group described itself as being committed to the early adolescent age group as well as to the school.

The school itself is fairly new. According to the workshop participants, the community had given a lot of support to the school when it was first built. Recently, however, the community had begun to criticize the school and its policies. From the beginning of the workshop, the group claimed that the school needed to improve its image in the community, and that this was a very pressing problem.

Improving a school's image seemed to be an extremely difficult task. However, the workshop schedule required that before a group could work on a particular problem, it had to assess the current situation.

This eager and vocal group found it very easy to assess their current school environment. Even though they thought that the school had some significant weaknesses, it was the strengths of the school that the group identified very early in the assessment exercise. They talked proudly of the cooperation among students, administrators, teachers, and staff at the school. They claimed that the people at the school helped to make it a very positive place in which to work and learn. The group listed various opportunities for students as a significant strength of the school, and commented that the desire of all staff to continually improve increased the opportunities for both students and staff. The school was described as clean and happy, with lots of positive relationships among people in the school.

When the group realized what a long list of strengths their school possessed, they became very encouraged about the prospects of dealing with their weaknesses. The group decided that many of the weaknesses which were identified during this same assessment exercise, such as the effects of curriculum problems, overcrowding, and minor vandalism, were actually problems which could be solved by dealing with the larger issue of improving the school's image in the community.

As they worked through the assessment exercise, the process for improving their image became much clearer and less difficult than it had seemed at the beginning of the workshop. How could they improve their image? By telling the community about their many strengths which they had just identified! Suggestions came from all members of the group about how to increase communication with parents via newsletters and how to involve members of the community in the school. Furthermore, members of the group suggested that communication be increased throughout the school in order to maintain the currently high level of cooperation. Orientation programs were proposed for new students (and parents!) who would be entering the school community.

Assessment played an important role in this workshop. Problems could be identified easily, but without a careful assessment they appeared to be overwhelming. Through an assessment exercise, strengths as well as weaknesses were generated quickly and easily. The process here both suggested a plan of action and boosted the confidence of these people who wanted to make some important changes.

Change in any environment will vary in rate and amount. The rate of change for your school environment will be unique to your school and will depend upon the current istuation. The amount of change needed in one setting may be no greater than the transformation of a storage room into a student lounge. On the other hand, another setting might require a more elaborate set of changes over a longer period of time, and may require the involvement of many people in the school.

The following activities will help you to assess your own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of your school. The activities for "Self

Assessment" can be done individually or in groups. These activities could be used in classrooms, at faculty meetings, or in staff meetings. The activities for "School Settings Assessment" can also be used individually or in groups. An individual student may want to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the cafeteria so that it can be a more positive hub of activity in the school. A teacher may want to find out the possibilities for changes in his or her classroom. The food service manager may want to use these activities with a small group in order to improve their working conditions. The "General School Assessment" activity can be used by one person who is interested in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses or as a survey instrument to gauagethe attitudes of the entire school community. However the activities are used, the instructions provided with each will help you to find out more about your school and suggest ways that you can improve it.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Have you ever thought about your own personal strengths and weaknesses? You have goals for yourself both in and out of school, and your own abilities help you to achieve these goals. These "Self-Assessment" activities will help you to examine your goals and your abilities and to relate them to your life at school. A worksheet is provided for each activity. Instructions provided with each activity will help you to interpret your results whether you are working alone or in a group.

School and Life Plan: Page 23

Using the worksheet for this activity, develop your own "personal profile" based on your own goals and abilities. This profile is your "School and Life Plan." You have space in the worksheet to list one or two career goals and one or two personal/social goals.

John, a seventh grader at Newland Middle School, might list as a career goal "to become an electrical engineer." His current abilities in this area might be this understanding of electrical outlets in his home, and having recently helped his father rewire the basement recreation room. His own personal/social goals might include becoming more involved in the decisions made at his school. His abilities in this area would be what he learned about the school while he was a sixth grader and his ability to talk about the school to other students and a few of his teachers.

In listing his goals and abilities, John will discover both his plans for the future and his abilities that will help him realize his goals. Working through this activity in the handbook will help you see what personal and school goals you have for yourself.

Any assessment points out strengths and weaknesses. Here, your abilities are your strengths. You already use these strengths to reach your goals. What are some other ways that you can use your strengths? What changes can your strengths help you to make?

If you are working in a group, share your goals and abilities with the other group members. The group should compile a list of how the school helps the group members to reach their goals. This list will contain several strengths of the school.

Attitudes Survey: Page 24

A survey of your attitudes will show you how to take part in your school and how you feel about what you do at school. Assessing your own

attitudes will help you to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your school behavior. You can use your strengths to make changes in your school as well as to eliminate your own weaknesses.

Complete the survey worksheet for this activity. The instructions for interpreting your results apply whether you are using the activity alone or with others.

To interpret your results, make a chart like the one on the worksheet. Across the top of the chart write in all of the possible answers to the questions, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Down the side of the chart write the number of each question in the survey. If you completed the activity alone, place a check under your answer for each question on the chart. If you completed the activity in a group, record the number of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree answers to each question.

Now look carefully at the chart. You can see a pattern of your answers from the checks or numbers on the chart. The questions which are marked "agree" or "strongly agree" indicate strengths. Think about ways that you can use these strengths to make changes so that more of your answers could fall into the "agree" or "strongly agree" categories. Perhaps you need more information about your school to make changes. If so, what are the ways that you could get more information? If you are working in a group, gather ideas from the group about ways to make changes based on the group's answers to the questions.

Your "Self-Assessment" pointed out your strengths and weaknesses in your attitudes and behavior at school. Based on this assessment, you can make some small changes of your own to improve your school environment. A student in one workshop said that he would improve his school if he worked at controlling his "spring fever" and tried to get his work done. A cafeteria cashier suggested that she could improve the cafeteria by making it a point to smile at each person as he or she walked through the lunch line. A group of students at yet another school used their strengths in a science class to teach younger students in the school about plants. An administrator promised to answer each and every suggestion that was placed in her school's suggestion box.

Each of these people developed ideas about making small changes based on a careful assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. You can too!

School _____

Position:

1 = Administrator	1
2 = Teacher	2
3 = Support Staff	3
4 = Parent	4
5 = Student	5
Grade ____	____

Sex:

1 = Male	1
2 = Female	2

SCHOOL AND LIFE PLAN

INSTRUCTIONS: Whether working alone or in a group, each person should complete this form alone, then share the results with other.

* * * * * *

Career

	Goals	Abilities	How does your school help you develop your abilities?
Example:	To become an electrical engineer	Studied electrical outlets; helped Dad rewire basement	Did science project on electricity
1.			
2.			

Personal and Social Life

Example:	To become more involved in decisions made at school	6th grade experience; talking easily with and teachers	Orientation program for 6th graders; class discussion
1.			
2.			

ATTITUDES SURVEY

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the following statements as they relate to your school in general rather than on a particular day. Circle the appropriate number provided at the right on this sheet. Use these answers for the questions: 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly disagree. Circle one answer only.

* * * * * *

School _____

Position:
1 = Administrator 1
2 = Teacher 2
3 = Support Staff 3
4 = Parent 4
5 = Student 5
Grade ____ ____

Sex:
1 = Male 1
2 = Female 2

1. I know what is going on in my school.	1.	1 2 3 4 5
2. I work with others in my school to help improve it.	2.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I help to make decisions about what will be done in my school.	3.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I like myself when I am in school.	4.	1 2 3 4 5
5. Adults I know at my school like me.	5.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Students I know at my school like me.	6.	1 2 3 4 5
7. I do things that matter to me or to others in school.	7.	1 2 3 4 5
8. There are places in my school where I can help to improve it.	8.	1 2 3 4 5
9. There are places in my school where I can improve myself.	9.	1 2 3 4 5

CHART:

Questions:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					

SCHOOL SETTINGS ASSESSMENT

If you have completed some of the "Self-Assessment" exercises in this section, you have already identified many of your own strengths and weaknesses. It is important to know what your own strengths are before attempting to make some changes in your environment. But you need information about your school's strengths and weaknesses as well as information about your own! How can you get this information?

You can get this information by studying the various settings within your school. Your school environment is actually a collection of the many settings in which people interact each day. Four of these settings: the cafeteria, the classrooms, the library, and the hallways were discussed in the "Environmental Awareness" section of the Handbook-Part II. By carefully examining these settings you can uncover the strengths and weaknesses which will either help or hinder you in your efforts to improve your school environment.

The activities in this section will make it easy for you to explore various settings. Although there are four major settings in your school (cafeteria, classrooms, library, and hallways), there are many others in which you spend time and which have important strengths. Certainly you and your friends or colleagues talk with each other on the school grounds. The grassy area in front of the main entrance served as an important setting for interaction at one school. At another school, the grassy courtyard enclosed by the school building was a beautiful setting with a lot of potential, but was never used. At this school, the students suggested that science classes could meet in this area in nice weather and one teacher suggested that the area would be a lovely area for musical productions and graduations. This school developed new ways to use this setting by investigating its strong points and discussing various ideas.

You, too can learn how to get the best use out of the many settings in your school. Learning to use settings creatively will both improve your school environment and poeple's attitudes about the school. In the activities below, think about the strong points and weak points of various settings within your school. Since all of these settings together make up the total school environment, you will be assessing the strengths and weaknesses of your school at the same time.

The activities below can be done by one person or by many persons in a group. One student might select an activity in order to explore the strengths and weaknesses of his or her homeroom. A food service staff member might want to investigate the ways in which the caefteria's strengths can be used to combat its weaknesses. A parents' group could use one of these activities to become more familiar with certain places in the school. If several settings were investigated by different members of the parents' group, the results would give the group a fairly accurate picture of the total school environment.

A short description of each activity follows. Worksheets are provided for many of the activities, and each description includes instructions on how to use the results. Using just a few of the activities would show you the strengths and weaknesses of important settings in your school. Start by using Activity #1 alone or in a group, then decide which of the other activities will be best for you.

Important Information: Page 28

Complete the worksheet provided for this activity. This activity will show you the strengths of some important places in your school. It will also help you to think about specific weaknesses of your school and areas in which these weaknesses occur.

If you use this activity in a group, use the chart provided with the worksheet to examine your results. You will begin to find ways to eliminate your school's weaknesses by exploring ways that the strengths uncovered in the activity can eliminate the weaknesses.

Pressing Problems: Page 29

Using this activity after completing the "Important Information" activity will help you to carefully investigate some of the pressing problems in your school. Since you already listed one or two pressing problems in the "Important Information" activity, it will be easy to list these on this activity's worksheet. During this activity you will explore the ways in which different groups of people are involved with the problems, and the helps and hindrances which you will encounter in problem-solving. Completing the worksheet for this activity and discussing your results with others will prepare you to take action to solve the problems.

A group using this activity might want to choose two pressing problems and complete the worksheet as a group. The group members would then be very informed about the problem and able to act to solve it.

Important Settings

If you choose to do only <u>one</u> activity in this section, or if you want to do an activity that does not require a worksheet and a lot of time, then this is the activity for you!

This activity does not need a worksheet, and you will not need to chart your responses.

Think about the four major settings which have been described in this handbook: the cafeteria, the classrooms, the library, and the hallways. Try to think of one strength and one weakness in each setting. For example, you may like the colors of the cafeteria in your school, but may not like to spend time in the cafeteria because it always seems to be crowded. What is one change that you would recommend for this setting? Certainly you would not suggest a color change, because that is a strong point of the setting. Perhaps a change in the lunch schedule or a rearrangement of the tables would eliminate the weakness in this setting. For each setting listed above, think of a strong point and a weak point. Sometimes the strong point may help to eliminate the weak point. Based on your assessment of these settings, share your recommendations for them with others. If you are working in a group, each group member should suggest one change for each setting. These suggestions should be written down and shared with others in the school. Committees can be formed to implement some of the recommended changes.

Rules in Settings: Page 30

The physical characteristics of settings influence the interactions in the settings. But the rules in each setting also influence interactions, sometimes to a great extent. In this activity you will use the worksheet to examine the rules that influence your behavior in an important setting. This activity will allow you to develop one or two recommendations for the rules system in a setting which is important to you.

The use of this activity in a group will be particularly valuable. If the group is made up of different types of people, for example, students, teachers, support staff, parents, administrators, there will be many different settings whose rules poeple will identify. The group should vote on the most important rule for each setting which is named, and carefully consider any recommendations which are made for the rule.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete the following statements. If you are working in a group, use the chart below to organize your group's responses.

* * * * * *

School _____

Position:
1 = Administrator 1
2 = Teacher 2
3 = Support Staff 3
4 = Parent 4
5 = Student 5
Grade ____

Sex:
1 = Male 1
2 = Female 2

Complete the following statements:

1. My favorite place in my school is _____

   because _____.

2. The place in my school where I do not like to spend time

   is _____ because _____

   _____.

3. The best thing about the people in my school is _____

   _____.

4. The most pressing problem that exists in my school right now

   is _____.

Chart for Group Responses

STRENGTHS		WEAKNESSES
1. Favorite place:	How many chose each place?	2. Places where people do not like to spend time:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Strengths of the places listed in #1:		Weaknesses of the places listed in #2:
_____		_____
_____		_____
3. Best thing about people in school:		4. Most pressing problem:
_____		_____
_____		_____

Now discuss this question: How can the strengths in questions 1 and 3 combat the weaknesses in questions 2 and 4? For example, the friendly attitude of the food service personnel in the cafeteria may make it a favorite place. Perhaps this friendly attitude could be extended to the hallways early in the morning when they are <u>not</u> a favorite place.

School _____

Position:
1 = Administrator 1
2 = Teacher 2
3 = Support Staff 3
4 = Parent 4
5 = Student 5
Grade ____ ____

Sex:
1 = Male 1
2 = Female 2

PRESSING PROBLEMS

INSTRUCTIONS: Think back to Activity #1 in which you identified some pressing problems in your school. These may have occurred in a variety of settings, and have a number of causes. Now think carefully about these problems. Make sure that what you are thinking of as problems are really important problems which need to be changed. Since you and others are putting a lot of energy into these activities, be sure that you are not wasting your time working on the results of the problem rather than on the problem itself!

Using the worksheet below, you can "analyze" a few of your school's problems. A good problem analysis considers the people who are involved and how they influence the problem. Besides particular people who may be involved with problems, think about the more general forces or attitudes in the school which influence the problem. List below two problems that you have identified in your school. Then complete the other columns so that you have a large amount of information about who is involved with the problem, and what the supports and barriers are that you will encounter in problem-solving.

	Column 1 PRESSING PROBLEMS	Column 2 WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE PROBLEM?	Column 3 HOW ARE PEOPLE INVOLVED?	Column 4 WHAT WILL HELP TO SOLVE PROBLEM?	Column 5 WHAT WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO SOLVE PROBLEM?
1.					
2.					

Look carefully at your worksheet. How can you best use the people or things in Column 4? The help in Column 4 might outweigh the hindrances in Column 5. By sharing this list with your group members or others in the school you will identify those people who will help to solve the problems. Ask those people for help in eliminating the hindrances to problem solving.

School _____

Position:
1 = Administrator 1
2 = Teacher 2
3 = Support Staff 3
4 = Parent 4
5 = Student 5
Grade ____

Sex:
1 = Male 1
2 = Female 2

RULES IN SETTINGS

INSTRUCTIONS: This activity is appropriate for use by one person or by many persons. A classroom teacher might find this activity to be very useful in generating class discussion.

Before answering the questions below, read the examples carefully.

* * * * * *

There are many types of rules in your school environment. Some of these may be formal, written rules, while others may be informal rules that are not written. The rules in your school differ greatly by setting. For example, students are usually allowed to talk with each other in the cafeteria, while talking with each other may be discouraged in the classrooms. Even for someone who spends all of his or her time in one setting, for example the cafeteria, the rules may be different in different areas of that setting. A food service worker may behave very differently in the kitchen than he or she does on the serving line. How does your behavior vary in different settings? Answering the following questions will help you find out.

Choose a setting in which you spend a lot of time. Write the setting here:

_____.

Now list three rules that govern your behavior in that setting. They can be written or unwritten rules:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Who contributed to the development of these rules?

_____

Write one change that you would recommend in the rules for this setting here:

_____

In what ways could you share your recommendations for the rules with the people who developed them? If others have written recommendations also, collect them and share them with those who developed the rules. It may be possible to change some of rules in order to make unpleasant settings good settings and make good settings even better!

GENERAL SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

It is often very helpful to start any assessment with an overall picture of the general school environment. Although each of the activities in the "Self-Assessment" and "School Settings Assessment" sections will help you to develop an image of your general school environment, you may find the "General School Survey" activity a useful place to begin your assessment efforts.

General School Survey

The "General School Survey" form has been used widely in many schools to assess people's attitudes about the strengths and weaknesses of their school. The survey form can be used in many ways. One person may wish to carefully explore his or her attitudes about the school and find it helpful to complete the survey alone. A group of people may wish to identify the general attitudes and perceptions of the group members before they begin to work on particular problems or issues.

The survey form is especially useful if one or several people would like to survey all of the students, teachers, support staff, administrators, and even parents connected with the school. It can be duplicated for use in classrooms or in a general assembly, and the results are fairly easy to tabulate.

Tabulating the Results. Compiling the results from the survey form is easily done if the form is completed by one person or by several persons in a group. The pattern of results will identify the general attitudes of the respondents. For example, several answers of "all the time" or "most of the time" to positive questions such as "Things I do help improve my school" and "There are places in my school where I can improve myself," indicate that the respondent feels as though he or she has a positive impact on the school and that the school supports his or her participation in the school. A pattern of results can emerge from negative questions as well, for example, "strongly agree" or "agree" answers to questions about the noise level and the crowded conditions of the school accurately reflect the respondents' opinions. Patterns of results can be identified for any number of respondents. If the survey is used for the entire school, one or two classes might make it a class project to tabulate people's responses to selected questions. It is important to separate responses by position in the school since each group of people may have different opinions. A careful survey may be the first step toward identifying subtle, but very important strengths of the school which can be tapped to combat more obvious problems.

GENERAL SCHOOL SURVEY

GENERAL DIRECTIONS: The answers on this questionnaire will be used to make this school better. Your honest answers to the following statements will be greatly appreciated. Please answer the statements as they relate to your school in general rather than on a particular day. Circle the appropriate number provided at the right on this sheet. Your answers will be confidential. Be sure to read the instructions for each section.

* * * * * *

School _____

Position:

1 = Administrator	1
2 = Teacher	2
3 = Support Staff	3
4 = Parent	4
5 = Student	5
Grade	___ ___

Sex:

1 = Male	1
2 = Female	2

INSTRUCTIONS: For statements 1 through 13 you should use these answers: 1 = All of the time, 2 = Most of the time, 3 = Half of the time, 4 = Some of the time, and 5 = Never. Please circle <u>one</u> answer <u>only</u>.

1.	I know what is going on in my school.	1.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I work with others in my school to help improve it.	2.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I show others how to improve my school.	3.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Things I do help improve my school.	4.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I help to make decisions about what will be done in my school.	5.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Adults I know at my school like me.	6.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I like myself when I am in school.	7.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Students I know at my school like me.	8.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I think that I matter to at least one other person in school.	9.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I do things that matter to me or to others in school.	10.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	If I break a rule, I can see someone to get a fair penalty.	11.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Students in my school help to make the rules and penalities.	12.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Adults in my school help to make the rules and penalities.	13.	1	2	3	4	5

* * * * * * * *

INSTRUCTIONS: For statements 14 through 31 you should use these answers: 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly disagree. Please circle <u>one</u> answer <u>only</u>.

14.	I like the colors in my school.	14.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	There is too much noise in my school.	15.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	My school is too hot in some places and too cold in others.	16.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	My school is too crowded.	17.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	There are some things in my school that help school pride.	18.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Students help to improve the way my school looks.	19.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	People at my school help me to improve myself.	20.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	School and classroom rules help me to take part in my school.	21.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	School and classroom rules help me to feel good about myself.	22.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	The way my school looks helps me to feel good about myself.	23.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	The way my school looks helps me to take part in my school.	24.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	People help me to make choices and take action in my school.	25.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	There are places in my school where I can help to improve it.	26.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	There are places in my school where I can improve myself.	27.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	The cafeteria is a place where I help to improve my school.	28.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	The classrooms are a place where I help to improve my school.	29.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	The library is a place where I help to improve my school.	30.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	The hallways are a place where I help to improve my school.	31.	1	2	3	4	5